

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P 021720Z NOV 76

FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 773

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0305

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: GLOOMY FEDERALISTS IN QUEBEC

1. MAYOR OF QUEBEC, GILLES LA MANTAGNE, WHO IS ALSO PROMINENT MEMBER OF QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY ESTABLISHMENT, YESTERDAY CONFIDED TO ME HIS FEARS THAT LIBERALS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING NOVEMBER 15 ELECTION. AT PRESENT, HE SAID, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHO MIGHT WIN. ELECTION IS LIKELY BE DECIDED, HE SAID, ON BASIS OF "WHO MAKES FIRST MISTAKE" RATHER THAN ON MORE POSITIVE GROUNDS.

2. BOURASSA MADE A GRAVE ERROR IN CALLING ELECTION THIS FALL THE MAYOR OPINED. ABOUT A MONTH AGO THE PREMIER HAD ASKED LA MONTAGNE TO CONTEST A RIDING IN QUEBEC. HE REFUSED ON GROUNDS THAT "I DO NOT AGREE WITH ALL POLICIES OF BOURASSA'S GOVERNMENT AND WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEFEND THEM". AT THAT TIME, THE MAYOR SAID, HE ADVISED BOURASSA NOT TO CALL AN ELECTION THIS FALL BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF THE AIR CONTROLLERS CONTROVERSY ON PUBLIC OPINION. THIS SINGLE ISSUE, HE ASSERTED, HAS BEEN POTENT ENOUGH TO PUSH MANY WAVERING QUEBECOIS FIRMLY INTO PARTI QUEBECOIS CAMP AND MAKES DEFENSE OF FEDERALISM VERY DIFFICULT FOR QUEBEC POLITICANS.

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3. BOURASSA TOLD MAYOR HE FELT COMPELLED TO HOLD ELECTION IN FALL WHILE UNION NATIONALE WAS STILL WEAK AND BEFORE THE PARTY IS ABLE PROVIDE FEDERALIST ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERALS. MAYOR, WITH EVIDENT DISPLEASURE IN HIS VOICE, SAID HE TOLD PREMIER THAT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO RISK LOSING SEATS TO UN, "WITH WHOM ONE COULD MAKE A DEAL," THAN TO P.Q. WHO WISH CHANGE WHOLE SYSTEM. THE MAYOR'S ARGUMENT OBVIOUSLY DID NOT DISSUADE BOURASSA FROM FOLLOWING WHAT HE VIEWED AS HIS POLITICAL INTEREST.

4. COMMENT: THE MAYOR'S FRANKNESS IN CRITICIZING THE PREMIER WAS UNCHARACTERISTIC OF A MAN WHO IS USUALLY EXTREMELY DISCRET. IT IS, HOWEVER, A MEASURE OF THE ANXIETY MANY FEDERALISTS HERE ARE FEELING AS ELECTION DAY APPROACHES WITH THE MAJOR FEDERALIST PARTY IN EVIDENT DIFFICULTY. AS MANY HAVE COMMENTED TO ME, STAKES IN THIS ELECTION ARE HIGH AND FEDERALIST VOTE DIVIDED BETWEEN FOUR OR FIVE PARTIES.  
MCNAMARA

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